

bound herself to furnish men and money to help the patriot cause.

But the religious rancour had been only scotched, not killed, by the Pacification, as the outburst at Ghent, where a democratic Calvinist party seized Aerschot, governor of Flanders and leader of the Catholic reactionary party, plainly demonstrated. William, in fact, committed the blunder of clandestinely encouraging this ominous outbreak as a handy manoeuvre against Aerschot's intrigues, though he subsequently strove to assuage the tyranny of the Calvinist demagogues whom he had at first secretly patronised. The volcano of bigotry was by no means extinct, and it was in the midst of these portents of the renewed eruption of the anarchic passions at work within that Don John, with the reinforcements brought him by his nephew, Alexander Farnese, prince of Parma, dealt the crushing blow to the patriot cause at Gembloers (31st January 1578). The rout of Gembloers was the cavalier's stunning answer to the tactics that had driven him from Brussels. The diplomatic duel gave place once more to the duel of battle and siege, and in this duel the skill of Parma, whom Don John, on his death shortly after (October 1578), had nominated his successor, told decisively against William's scheme of an united Netherlands. In Parma he found an antagonist who could fence in the diplomatic arena as skilfully as he could fight in the field. In vain did William and the States-General, which were forced to retire by the rout of Gembloers from Brussels to Antwerp, strive to rally the provinces by a more explicit declaration on the subject of toleration (Peace of Religion, July 1578), and by placing the Duke of Alengon-Anjou in the breach with the title of "Defender of the Liberty of the Netherlands." Equally vain the advent of the young Duke Casimir, son of the Calvinist Elector of the Palatinate, as the champion of the Calvinists of Flanders and Brabant. Anjou and Casimir, let alone Mathias, were no match for Parma, and ere long retired. The English alliance proved an illusion. Treachery too was doing its subtle work in the patriot league. The Peace of Religion only aggravated the religious strife. The Calvinist democrats of Ghent and other Flemish cities sacked the churches, murdered or maltreated priests and monks, and denounced